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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to synthesize the ideas and proposals in 10 papers commissioned by the National Center for Education Statistics to identify issues in early childhood education which have major relevance to public policy. Part I offers a brief overview of the context in which the issues were raised, focusing on current trends, information gaps, fragmentation of services, the low quality of out-of-home provisions, and the stability of effects. Part II gives particular attention to three interrelated questions: (1) Where are the children? (2) What is the quality of their experience? and (3) What impact does early out-of-home experience have? Question 1 is discussed in terms of identifying a sample of target children. Discussion of question 2 probes contrasts between home and out-of-home settings, indices of quality, perspectives from "above" and "below" and indices of quality, parameters of environments and indices of quality, structural characteristics of the setting, characteristics of adults and adult-child relationships, stability of relationships, issues in the continuity of experience, and language and linguistic usage. Question 3 is explored with regard to cultural appropriateness and continuity, staffing, and parent-school relations. Part III briefly summarizes the outcomes of the synthesis and makes recommendations for further research on four hypotheses included in the discussion. (RH)

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ISSUES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR DATA COLLECTION*

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Synthesis of Round One Papers

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Lilian G. Katz

The purpose of this paper is to synthesize the ideas and proposals in the 10 "Round One" papers commissioned by NCES to identify major policy-relevant issues in early childhood education. Part I is a brief overview of the present context in which the issues are raised; Part II summarizes and synthesizes the themes addressed in most of the papers; Part III presents a brief summary of recommendations for data collection.

Part I: Overview of the Current Context

Current Trends

All authors agree that three major trends currently converge to produce heightened interest and widespread concern about the provision of care and education for young children. First, the so-called feminist-employment trend that appears not only to be growing, but to be irreversible, continues to produce a pressing demand for out-of-home care/education for

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* Numerals in the text refer to the Round One papers as listed at the end of the text.

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children before the age of compulsory education, and for after-school care once schooling begins. The second trend, which merges the education reform movement and a growing faith in the benefits of early intervention for children 'at risk,' is an increasing demand for prekindergarten programs of all kinds. A third trend is the widespread 'push down' of later grade expectations for academic achievement into early childhood education classes. The latter trend is accompanied by elevated rates of early grade retention rates and increases in the provision of transition classes for children unable to adapt to the pushed down curriculum.

All authors agree that in such a context, the early childhood care and education scene is shifting somewhat chaotically, and that the development of sound policies with respect to early childhood education in general, for out-of-home care specifically, and designing practical options for families are both urgent and propitious.

Information Gaps

While it is clear that the early childhood care and education situation is in flux, the absence of dependable sources of information about its availability and impact means that researchers and planners are at the mercy of their best guesses. Explicitly or implicitly, the papers emphasize the urgent need for more and better information

about the general conditions of early childhood care and education in the U. S. today. Most authors point out that much of the presently available information is scattered and difficult to access, retrieve and synthesize; and much of it is of unknown reliability. This puts researchers, planners and others involved in making complex decisions at a substantial disadvantage.

Fragmentation of Services

All papers agree that, to the extent that we do know anything about the current situation, the field suffers from a variety of types of fragmentation. An unknown number of children fall between the cracks of child care and educational services provided by a wide variety of agencies typically dedicated to special sub-populations. Indeed, many agencies are so specialized that they can only respond to a sub-set of a young child's needs. Infrastructures are rarely in place that could coordinate and consolidate the scattered care and educational services that sometimes even compete with each other for the same scarce resources (2).

Low Quality of Out-of-Home Provisions

All papers underscore the generally lamentable quality of provisions for preschoolers, especially for all-day child care. However, consensus as to the appropriate indices of quality in child care and preschool education has yet to be achieved. In the interim, all authors agree that the quality of child care and preschool

education is, at best, very uneven, is seriously inequitable with respect to particular sub-populations, and is strongly related to complex personnel issues.

All authors agree that one of the quality issues is continuity. There is widespread agreement that the current state-of-the-art of early child care and education subjects children to at least two kinds of discontinuity: temporal and inter-setting. The former alludes to the difference between the norms, expectations, and practices between preschool and elementary education as experienced in temporal sequence. The latter refers to the concurrent discrepancies, if not incompatibilities, between the two main spheres of a young child's life: the home and the preschool/child care setting.

Stability of Effects

All authors express strong interest in both the immediate and long term effects of early childhood care and education. On the whole, the immediate benefits are fairly well documented for most of the 'at risk' groups thus far studied. But confidence in the stability and duration of these benefits is considerably guarded, and the need for more and better research on these matters is emphasized by all.

Part II: Common Themes

The ideas and proposals spelled out in the group of "Round One" papers can be summarized and synthesized under many different

headings. Inasmuch as the main purpose of this paper is to offer direction to subsequent information gathering and research efforts, the summary is organized by addressing four interrelated questions as follows:

Where are our children?

What is the quality of their experience?

What impact does early out-of-home experience have?

A fourth question: What information do we need? Is taken up in the summary. Although the four questions overlap in many respects, they are taken up in turn below.

Where are the children?

A common theme throughout the papers is the ambiguity of our knowledge concerning where prekindergarteners spend most of their time, what proportion of time they are in their own homes, in the homes of related or unrelated others, or in a wide variety of other settings. While it is clear that 96% of U.S. children attend kindergarten, most for half-day programs, data on the younger children have to be extrapolated or inferred from gross maternal employment figures and scattered other sources. The figure of 44% coverage of the demand for preschool education and care suggested by UNESCO and High/Scope data (8), gives no information about the types of settings used, the length and number of days, or the scope of services available in them.

Furthermore, meaningful studies of the effects of variations in the qualities of these provisions must take into account where else these children might be. In other words, if young children are not at home with a parent, what do we know about where are they and who

are they with? The development of national, state or local programs based on a policy of universal entitlement to optimal experiences requires baseline data that describe the environments in which they spend substantial proportions of their time. Using appropriate sampling strategies, these descriptive data should indicate proportions of time/per day/per week the nation's preschool children **typically** spend in their own-home and/or in one or more non-home settings.

It is not presently known for sure what proportion of children experience **multiple settings** per day. Practitioners in the field of early childhood education report that for some children the day begins at home with a parent, then a short stay with a baby-sitter, then a half-day at a preschool, then an afternoon in a child care facility, followed by going home again to be in the care of perhaps a sibling, etc.. A crude estimate of the number of adults a target child must relate to per day/per week, and the number of other children he is likely to interact with per day and per week should also be obtained.

One of the reasons why access to this information is desirable is to be able to examine some of the potential later adjustment problems of children who may not have the opportunity to develop deep attachments and bonds to one or two adults. It is hypothesized that when children's rearing or early care provisions undermine the opportunity to develop strong attachments and bonds to a small but stable number of adults, an affective or bonding vacuum may occur which may be filled by peers. If this is so, children whose daily schedules expose them to a wide variety of settings and relationships

very early in life will be more strongly and earlier influenced by their peers than would children reared by one or two stable adults to whom they are securely attached. In the preschool years the dependent variables to be examined in connection with this hypothesis are sociability versus intimacy; sociability means ease and satisfaction from peer interaction, but undiscriminating with respect to which peers, and an absence of signs of attachment (like selective attention and preferences for a limited number of peers, or the capacity miss a particular peer when separated from her, and so forth). The potential long term effects of the hypothesized premature peer influence (that fills a vacuum caused by weak child-adult attachment) must be observed over time; dependent variables to indicate excessive reliance on the peer culture would have to be development.

Furthermore, it is not known for which children the potential variety of settings, relationships, and interactors is likely to be overwhelming versus enriching, concurrently stressful, or debilitating (7). Such baseline data on these variables may be used to test the hypothesis that there is an optimal number of adult and peer relationships for young children above or below which subsequent adjustment problems may occur.

Identifying a sample of target children.

Answers to the question of where children are could be approached by identifying appropriate samples of 3 year old children as the starting points for data gathering. Once identified, information should be obtained that would describe the pattern of the daily/weekly settings in which they are educated and cared for.

One strategy might be to identify appropriate samples of kindergarten children (in public and privately funded programs), and obtain the required data on their *current* patterns of care and educational provisions, and also collect retrospective data on their preschool histories in follow-back fashion. The same group can also be followed up through their first grade year. In this way, at least three years of data about the children's care and education experiences can be collected. Once the settings are identified, baseline data on the characteristics of those settings (see below) in which target children spend substantial proportions of their waking hours--perhaps 25%--can be obtained. A model or framework for describing inter-institutional, or inter-governmental relationships (coordination, complementarity, scope of support services, overlap, etc.) and other community support services and resources available to non-home settings should be developed, and pertinent data collected.

Data should also be obtained from parents or guardians about what kinds of early education and care they would consider ideal for their children, and which of a number of plausible options would be preferred if they were available, and the reasons underlying their preferences.

The main emphasis in these efforts is on being able to produce reasonably accurate answers to such questions such as:

1) Where are all children at a given age (e.g. 3 or 4)?

2) What proportion the day/week do they spend in each setting?

3) Who is with them?

4) How satisfied are parents/guardians with the early child care and education provisions available to them?

5) What provisions/arrangements do parents/guardians prefer?

What is the quality of the children's experiences?

A common concern expressed repeatedly in all ten papers, and reflected in much of the current discussion in the field of early childhood education, is the *quality* of the care and education of young children. Most of the research and opinion literature on the topic of quality has centered on the problems of establishing and maintaining adequate quality of child care rather than of early childhood education programs.

Contrasts between home and out-of-home settings

Before we enter the discussion about the specific indices of quality in young children's environments, it may be useful to examine some prevalent assumptions in common arguments about the care of young children outside their own homes away from their own parents.

Much of the current debate about the developmental consequences of various kinds of child care provisions, the effects of the age of entry, of child/staff ratio and staff characteristics, etc., *implicitly* contrasts poor programs with more or less idealized home

environments, or vice versa. Those opposed to public support for child care programs appear to assume that when children are not in child care programs they are in good, or at least adequate home environments. On the other hand, advocates of child care programs seem to assume that good quality early education/care settings are readily available to children whose home environments put them at risk for school failure. Of course, a "good quality" home environment is preferable for a child than a "poor quality" child care program; similarly, it is easy to argue that a child is better off in a "good quality" child care/preschool setting than in a "poor quality" home. But the contrasts could go at least four ways - forming a typology along two dimensions: (1) home the versus not-home, and (2) adequate versus inadequate quality of each of them. Figure 1 shows a possible typology that might be used to examine the differentiated effects of home and out-of-home environments of different quality on such long term outcomes as school adjustment, peer relationships, mental health and others.

[Figure 1 on page 10 about here]

Vandell and Corasaniti (in press) report that when a group of 238 children with different early child care histories were compared at the age of 8 years, those who had spent more time in child care in infancy were rated by teachers and parents as having poorer peer relationships, work habits, and emotional health, and as being more difficult to discipline. However, the study was conducted in Texas which has minimal child care standards. The study does not permit

comparisons of the effects at 8 years of age by the quality of the environments in which they had their early experiences. It would be useful to be able to compare data on 8 year olds with extensive experience in early child care by quality.

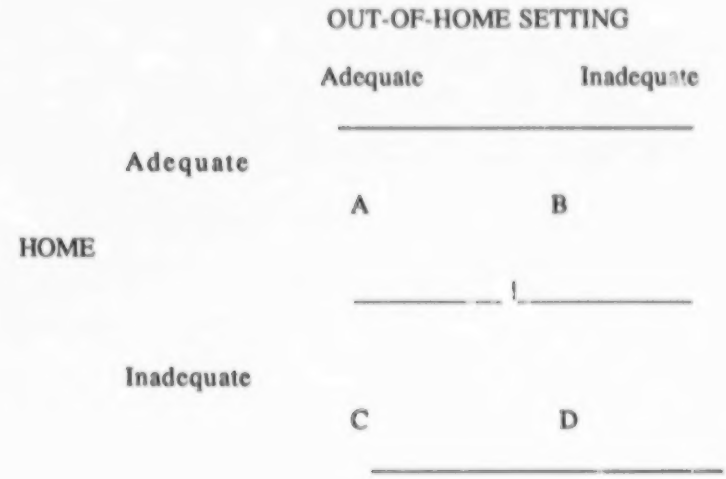

Figure 1. Two environments and two levels of adequacy affecting children's development.

Meaningful contrasts between these types of environments and their short and long term consequences requires the development of indices of quality in both kinds of environments, and of reliable dependent measures of children's development in the social, intellectual and academic domains over a period of about three years (e. g. from age 3 to 6 years old). It seems reasonable to assume that children whose experiences place them in cell A have the best long term *sequelae*, that children in D have the worst, and that those who fall in B and C are equal to each other.

Indices of Quality

Inasmuch as all environments for children have quality - some high, some low, and some in between - the difficult question is What are appropriate indices of quality? As indicated by several of the Round One papers, there are many views concerning indices of quality. Phillips & Howes (1987) state that both global and specific dimensions of child care settings have been used to describe their quality. The global approach attempts to describe the overall climate of a program; the specific dimensions have included such variables as staff qualifications, group composition, adult-child and child-child interaction, staff stability, and so forth (Phillips & Howes, 1987).

Perspectives from 'above' and 'below' and indices of quality

Almost any large scale survey can align data along two distinct dimensions: the view 'from above' that is typical of national statistical summaries and commonly referred to as 'head counting,' and the view 'from below,' that is the world from the eyes of the child (Katz, 1982). Whereas
the view from 'above' enumerates the rates of participation in child care centers, family day care homes, baby-sitting services, etc., the view from 'below' indicates what can be inferred about the child's own experience of the content and affective tone of interaction with adults and peers, the consequences suffered for non-compliance with adult demands, the frequent need to break and make relationships with staff (given high turn-over rates) and so forth.

Both of the approaches described by Phillips and Howes (1987), global and specific, represent perspectives on early child care and education from 'above,' so to speak. That is to say, they are judgments and logical inferences based on observations made by adults looking at the settings from above or outside of the child about the effects of what is observed on children's growth, learning and development. In theory at least, it is the view from 'below' that is most likely to predict short and long term effects.

Thus when adults examine characteristics of settings for children, they are viewing the setting from 'above' so to speak. On the basis of the best available knowledge of growth, development and learning, assumptions and inferences are made about the impact of the observed phenomena on children's development. The perspective from 'below' on the other hand, takes as a starting point observations of an individual child on the basis of which inferences are made about what it feels like to be that child in that part of the physical and interpersonal environment. In other words, the view from 'above' would identify perhaps an acceptable staff-child ratio, but the view from 'below' may suggest that experiencing the environment as satisfying and interesting is unrelated to staff-child ratio, but perhaps to some other variable. It may be possible to see children who appear to feel depressed in environments which vary substantially in child-staff ratios. What we do not know at present is whether the indices based on parameters observed from above are systematically related to indices based on the best possible inferences about life 'from below.'

The view from 'above' answers questions about the **quality of the environment;** the view from 'below' addresses questions of the **quality of life** as experienced by those within that environment. Common sense suggests that the relationship between these two views of quality is likely to be a strong one. However, even when an inner city preschool is compared to one in an affluent suburb the view from 'above' indicates that the quality of the latter is better than that of the former, it does not follow that the view from 'below' will be different for all children; the range of levels of feelings of confidence, satisfaction, interest, absorption and involvement experienced by the children in each of the two types of settings may be the same. But in the absence of clear empirical tests of the relationships between the two perspectives it seems reasonable to assert that the most powerful impact of a child's experience depends upon how it is viewed from 'below' much more than how it is assessed from 'above.' The discussion of indices of quality that follows attempts to take both perspectives into account.

Parameters of environments and indices of quality

According to the proposals in the Round One papers, indices of quality can be grouped into four parameters that can be applied more or less to all settings for young children:

(a) structural characteristics of the setting

(b) characteristics and attributes of the adults and adult-child relationships in both home and out-of-home settings, e.g., parenting styles, teacher training and length of experience, sensitivity, attitudes, etc.;

(c) the stimulus characteristics of the environment, e.g., the available materials, activities, curriculum, etc.;

(d) continuity and compatibility , e.g., between home and non-home setting, between preschool and kindergarten, etc.,

Structural characteristics of the setting.

Most of the Round One papers nominate the variables listed below for inclusion as indices of quality.

Home background data. Structural characteristics of the home as seen from 'above' include:

demographic descriptors, including type of dwelling, space, and other indicators of 'human capital' in the home (3),

Aspects of the setting to be examined from 'below' include

the general stimulus potential of the home environment (5),
overall quality of home life (mood, tension, etc.)

Out-of-home setting data. As seen from 'above' data describing the out-of-home settings should include:

sponsorship, sources of funds,fees and charges,
number served, group/unit size,
child-adult ratios
length of day
staff turnover rates
per/child expenditures
attendance/absenteeism
parental participation rates
administrative unit, governance and licensure, regulations,
range of services available,
characteristics of the clientele, e.g. s.e.s., race and ethnic composition of clientele

Characteristics of relationships in the non-home setting that may help to describe the overall quality of life as seen from 'below' include:

mood and morale in the setting
stability of relationships
stimulus characteristics of the setting

language and linguistic characteristics of the setting
concurrent and sequential continuity

Characteristics of adults and adult-child relationships

Most of the papers in the set dwell extensively on characteristics of adults, their relationships and interaction patterns with children (see for example 5 for detailed listing of relevant variables). Standard variables, such as the general level of education, the amount and type of training and experience of the adults, their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, etc. should be described. However, below is a brief discussion of variables not taken up in the papers that merit consideration in the data collection plans.

Mood of the setting. Recent research indicates that most young children are susceptible to the moods of those with whom they spend much time (Cummings, 1987; El-Sheikh, et al, 1989). Young children seem to be especially sensitive to anger and hostility, primarily because these aspects of the interpersonal environment tend to be more salient than for example, contentment or acceptance. Studies indicate that children who spend large proportions of time in tense, hostile or otherwise discordant environments are diverted from their own development; the presence of negative affect seems to put young children at risk of not being free to explore or involve themselves in their environments and relationships fully enough to enhance their own learning. Such children are, as it were, not free to play with their environment or their peers. Apparently, when the view from 'below' is one of tension and hostility between adults, the child experiences a sense of wariness or even outright danger, and is distracted from participation by his/her own worries about the

situation. However, data on these variables are likely to be difficult to obtain. Observations of children within the setting are required to yield best guesses of the perception from "below' of adult moods, and to ascertain immediate and long term impacts of these perceptions.

Morale of adults in the setting. In a similar way, the morale of adults in a preschool or child care program may affect many of the participating children. When viewed from 'above,' the morale of adults may be manifested on a continuum from optimism to pessimism, high to low enthusiasm, eagerness and confidence, etc.. Optimism and enthusiasm are energizing and should contribute to high levels of alertness, responsiveness and interaction. Pessimism, discouragement and feelings of inefficacy may be manifested in unresponsiveness, indifference and neglect. These variables in adult behavior can be expected to impinge more fully on some children than on others.

Low morale, manifested in moods of despair, a sense of helplessness and powerlessness are thought to be especially linked to poverty and racial and ethnic discrimination and oppression (7). But demoralization is also generally attributed to child care workers for whom pay, working conditions, and status are generally deplorable. Thus an estimate of the general mood, tension level and morale of both the own-home and out-of-home environment should be included in the data gathering from 'above.' It seems reasonable to assume that we cannot have optimal environments for children unless the environments are optimal for the adults as well. While there may be some days when what is optimal for one group is obtained at the expense of the other, on the average the quality of

life for both adults and children in an environment they share should be satisfying and interesting.

From 'below', children's own moods may provide useful information. Evidence derived from direct observations of a sample of children should help establish the extensiveness such mood-related phenomena as the feelings of helplessness (7), interest and involvement versus indifference and boredom with the available activities, enthusiasm and eagerness versus resistance to going to preschool/child care or school and to participate in its activities, "hurried child" syndrome (5, 9.), general positive expectations (e.g. that adults and peers are cheerful, positive, accepting, etc.,) can provide a description of best possible inferences about what it feels like to be a child in the environment in question.

Obtaining reliable measures of children's moods or affective states in general is clearly methodologically problematic. Manifestations of depression and anger are fairly easy to observe. However, the real meanings of positive moods are more difficult to discern. But because early childhood practitioners often justify their practices on grounds that "the children love it"--no matter what <u>it</u> is - some assessment of this view from 'below' is important. Teachers' justification of activities on the grounds that the children are having fun confuses the superficial positive mood generated by amusement with deeper positive affect based or deep satisfaction obtained by effort required by challenging and interesting activities (see especially Dweck, (1986) and chapter 2 in Katz & Chard, 1989). Curriculum content and activities that settle for amusement and titillation are unlikely to cultivate the development of the intellect.

Furthermore, periods of excessive fun and amusement are likely to be followed by dips into negative troughs when the parties are over. Inasmuch as most children in the early years are still willing and eager to please adults, and are still attracted even to frivolous and mindless activities (if they are novel enough), they readily appear to be having fun and to be in a positive mood. However, a program is likely to be more beneficial in the *long term* if a substantial portion of the time is allocated to activities in which children are deeply absorbed, interested and seriously intellectually engaged from which they can derive satisfaction rather than amusement. It would be useful to gather data with which to test the hypothesis that the best long term outcomes can be predicted when children are provided with a mixture of activities experienced from 'below' at optimal (vs. minimal or maximal) levels on the following continua:

easy versus challenging
boring versus interesting
absorbing/engaging/satisfying versus amusing/entertaining
routine versus stressful

Similarly, it is important to ascertain through observation and questionnaires whether the out-of-home setting fosters **intellectual** development in the long term, even though it may yield disappointing **academic** results in the short term. Again, the main distinction between the two is that the intellectual emphasis challenges children in ways that engage their minds in exploring, investigating, problem-solving so that their developing skills can be applied to topics of interest and relevance to them; the academic

curriculum emphasis provides children with decontextualized excercises in separate isolated skills related to the 3 "R's" taught in a direct instructional style. While the two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they tend to be so in practice. The hypothesis that they vary in terms of short and long term effects is suggested by the research on the enduring effects of Montessori methods on children usually thought to be at risk for school failure (Miller and Dyer, 1973 discussed in paper 4). The best interpretation of the longitudinal data on the Montessori versus academic direct instructional methods that show fade-out (3) effects is that skills can be acquired by intensive instructional drill, but that in the process of acquisition, the child's disposition to use the skills is damaged. On the other hand, pedagogical approaches (like the Montessori Method and some others) that emphasize strengthening intellectual dispositions and eschew early academic instruction tend to show poor academic achievement early, but strong test performance later. This so-called damaged disposition hypothesis can only be tested by comparative follow-up studies of children exposed to curriculum approaches in which at least one of them addresses intellectual dispositions (e.g. interest, intrinsic motivation, initiative, etc,.) as worthwhile outcomes (Katz & Chard, 1989).

Stability of relationships.

One of the central issues in early childhood development, care and education is the stability of relationships between children and the adults who are significant to them. Virtually all papers imply that stability of relationships, especially in the out-of-home setting, merits inclusion as an index of the quality of early childhood

environments from both the 'above' and 'below' perspectives. Data concerning children's interpretations of broken relationships (e.g., a teacher or caretaker not returning) have not been reported, and would be an important addition to our understanding of the potential seriousness of the high rates of staff turnover alluded to in many of the papers.

Individual differences in children's ways of coping with more or less changes in relationships as they shift from perhaps a family day care home to a baby sitter, or from one relative to another are not known. Hypothetically, there may be an optimal number of relationship changes such that children who have too few changes experience each that they do have more acutely than others, and children who have more than an optimal number of changes in relationships interpret them as rejection, and perhaps resist the development of subsequent attachments.

Controversy about the potential negative social impact of early institutionalization raised by Belsky's (1988) review of the available research is based largely on concern about the potential negative effects on children's long term social adjustments of these early experiences with relationships . The effects of frequent changes may be experienced as more debilitating if the attachment children develop with their caretakers in out-of-home settings are strong and warm rather than weak and distant. The high staff turnover rate in child care settings mentioned in many of the papers (see 1, 2, 3, 4 &5) may either prevent the development of strong and warm attachments that might cause distress at separation, or exacerbate the problems in developing attachments by causing frequent

separation from persons the child is trying to relate to. Because developmentalists generally agree that optimal development requires the establishment of secure attachments to one or more adults we need data that would enable us to examine the possible effects of the children's attachments in the settings in which they spend substantial proportions of time and of the stability of those relationships on long term socio-emotional outcomes.

Issues in the continuity of experience

All papers allude to various kinds of continuity in children's experiences as factors to be taken into account in assessing the quality of provisions. Two main kinds of continuity of experience are addressed: the continuity between settings or spheres experienced concurrently, and between settings experienced sequentially.

Concurrent inter-setting continuity. From 'above', inter-spherical continuity and compatibility issues include their behavioral norms and other aspects of institutional setting sub-cultures, expectations particularly with respect to styles of parent and child, non-parent and child, and child-child interaction, language and linguistic usage, criteria of self esteem, and norms with respect initiative and compliance, and so forth.

However, from 'below' it is not at all clear for which children and under what conditions discontinuity in these realms is a serious issue. It seems reasonable to assume that discontinuity between own-home and the outside world is a widespread experience of children in other times and many other places around the world in our own time. Whether such discontinuities are invariably

experienced as sources of stress, frustration, or confusion is not known. Some discontinuities might consist of differences that are not incompatible or conflicting, but might simply be enriching. Furthermore, the term *continuity* itself is value-neutral: two settings could offer a child high continuity and both of the settings might be inadequate. Two settings could be discontinuous such that one is adequate and the other inadequate; no one seriously suggests increasing continuity by making both settings similar but inadequate! In the same way at least two settings could be discontinuous and yet reasonably responsive to a given child's feelings and developmental needs, albeit in different ways. Many preschool children seem to be able to cope with participation in two discontinuous settings at the same time; many seem able to accept the fact that each has its own norms, rules, expectations and routines. It is not clear for how many children (experienced from 'below') discontinuity is a real problem. Children's perspectives on this issue are urgently needed.

Methods should be developed by which to assess children's perceptions of the differences, discontinuities, and the extent to which adults' norms and expectations in two or more settings are compatible, and whether these variables can be identified as sources of stress to them. At what age can most children cope with more than one culture simultaneously? Which separate cultures are easier to span? What factors or strategies ease the participation across them? The work of current ethnographers, cross-cultural cognitive psychologists and cultural anthropologists is likely to provide good

bases for the development of strategies by which to collect baseline data.

Stimulus properties of a setting. The own-home environments of young children are likely to vary in significant ways in any community (2, 5, 7). However, it is usually assumed that poverty, regardless of ethnic group, is associated with the under-stimulation of young children. While this may be the case in some kinds of poverty environments, it is not always so. Under-stimulation is more likely to be associated with rural than urban poverty.

Given the nature of inner city life, the environments of poor urban young children may appear from 'above' to be highly stimulating ones. However, they might be experienced from 'below' as overwhelming barrages! It may be useful to distinguish between a **stimulating** and an **informative** environment: the former is marked by a wide range of events, interactions, exposures and experiences many of which are novel and difficult for the child to interpret; the latter environment is the same one but also includes adults or older children who serve as mediators in that they help the child to make sense of the available stimulation by labeling, explaining and interpreting it (5). Adults in the latter case provide mediation between the naive child and the complex environment into which he or she is thrust. It is reasonable to assume that an absence of such mediators makes the child susceptible to feeling overwhelmed, helpless, powerless, stupid and incompetent, and that the cumulative effect of repeated exposure to overwhelming and uninterpretable events would be damaging to intellectual motivation and self confidence, especially in learning situations. Thus, some

indication of the amount of stimulation in the environment (perceived from 'below') and the availability of effective interpreters in the own-home setting should be obtained.

Reliable estimates of the stimulus potential of an environment from the perspective of the child would be difficult to obtain; some experiments along these lines would be helpful. Direct observations of children are required in order to make these kinds of inferences. The main point is that when descriptions of an environment from 'above' and 'below' diverge, it seems reasonable to assume that it is the latter one that impacts on the child's development, and will therefore provide the most useful predictive data.

Children for whom the own-home environment is high in stimulation (whether it is informative or not) may find the out-of-home setting (e.g., a child care or first grade class) comparatively **under-stimulating**, and may be motivated to enliven it through their own efforts in ways that may or may not be constructive (See for exampe Haskins, 1985). Conversely, if the relative stimulus potential of the two settings is reversed (low stimulation at home, high stimulation out-of-home), the view of the school from 'below' may be as a source of distress rather than as simply as one that is more stimulating that the home environment. Observations sould indicate the extent to which adults in the out-of-home setting fulfill mediating functions as well.

Sequential continuity. Virtually all papers point to discontinuities of children's experiences as they progress from preschool into the kindergarten and primary school settings as a serious issue. In particular, discontinuity of the curriculum from one

age-grade to the next, and a variety of problems attendant to it, receives strong emphasis in nearly all the papers. The main features of the preschool-to-primary school discontinuity are (a) pedagogical approach, and (b) the curriculum content. Again, continuity for its own sake is not desirable: inappropriate and poor pedagogical styles and curriculum practices can be continued from preschool up into kindergarten and the primary grades and simply be *continuously* inadequate and inappropriate throughout. The underlying issue is not whether norms, expectations and practices are continuous, but whether they are appropriate pedagogical and curriculum practices at whatever level - preschool, kindergarten or primary school.

The so-called *push-down* phenomenon, while it increases continuity between the preschool and the elementary school curriculum, is a kind of curriculum continuity, but still may be judged from 'above' as exerting academic pressures on children prematurely. While it preserves some amount of continuity, it also blames the child for not being able to begin early to work at tasks and in ways that will be continued into the later grades. One response to this trend has been the widespread adoption of screening and testing procedures designed to make retention and placement decisions (6, 5) that appear to have long-term negative consequences for many children. The data collection should include descriptions of the curriculum content and processes, and observations of children's experiences in the out-of-home setting relevant to subsequent placement and retention problems.

Language and linguistic usage.

Because the preschool years constitute a critical period in achieving communicative competence, all papers allude to it as an important aspect of the quality of provisions for young children. The extent to which adults in both the own-home and out-of-home settings communicate with children, especially individually, informally and in small group contexts should be included as part of baseline data, regardless of the language and dialect used. When the out-of-home setting lacks ready and frequent access to adults competent in children's (first and/or only) language, perceptions from 'below' of how the child's language is treated, and the child's response to this predicament should be ascertained.

What impact do early out-of-home experiences have?

Most papers rehearse the findings from research on the short and long-term effects of various pedagogical and curriculum approaches, and call for more research into these matters. While there is general agreement that almost any preschool intervention improves children's academic performances in the short term compared to those who have no preschool experience, most authors are at best equivocal about the long-term advantages or superiority of any one of the current curriculum approaches that have been studied to date. As suggested by Powell, we need data that will describe the **modal** preschool program rather than experiments with more curriculum models.

Describing the modal curriculum or program requires observational and other sources of data on the variety and types of

activities, the 'lessons' or content taught/not taught, the pedagogical practices of the preschool, the kindergarten and the primary school settings. Such descriptions will give us a view from 'above.' However, the real impact of these features is best predicted from knowing how they are experienced from 'below.' For example, it is important to be able to determine the fine line between an individual child's experiencing a teacher's high expectations as a challenge versus as a source of stress to be avoided or resisted. Furthermore a given activity may seem benign or even challenging when it is experienced by a child occasionally or periodically, but as distressing or boring when experienced frequently. In other words, an activity that might be harmless or even beneficial if it occurs occasionally may have harmful negative cumulative effects if experienced frequently over long periods of time. Thus 'one-shot' descriptions of the curriculum and pedagogical practices of a preschool/child care or primary school setting may not be sufficient to yield powerful predictive data; we need observational data from which an analysis of *cumulative effects* can be discerned.

It was suggested earlier that one of the possible long term cumulative effects of early direct instruction in academic skills may be the weakening of the dispositions to use them. It would be very useful to include dispositional data in every year of data gathering. Similarly, it has been suggested by Ames (1989) that **motivation should be treated as an outcome** of a curriculum.

Descriptions of the modal program should include observational, teacher rating and survey data. At each age and grade

level studied, it would be desirable to ascertain how the children perceive the setting from 'below' on the following continua:

inviting versus squelching initiative
interesting versus boring
relaxing versus stressful,
flexible versus rigid,
receptive versus rejecting, and so forth.

Cultural appropriateness and continuity.

All papers address issues related to the cultural relevance of the curriculum content for the participants. It is difficult to know what cultural relevance means beyond the 'foods-festivals-fashions' approach (2). The critical factor may be the extent to which the **content** of the activities, reading materials, art and music. etc. offered incorporates the participating children's own experiences and environments and depicts characters who resemble themselves and others close to them. The general concern with cultural relevance of the curriculum and activities is especially manifested in the treatment and use of language. Data should be gathered concerning the extent to which children's first and second language acquisition are taken into account in the curriculum, pedagogical practices, hiring of staff and staffing patterns (2, 7).

Staffing

All papers make reference to the importance of the staff of a program as a central factor related to and even possibly as determinants of its overall quality. Under this heading are issues concerning the staffing patterns, staff-child ratios, turnover, staff expertise, qualifications, racial/ethnic/linguistic characteristics and

sensitivities, relationships of staff with parents, and ways in which these variables are inter-related. These issues are especially problematic at the preschool level, but there is some concern about them during the kindergarten and early primary grades as well (7, 9, 10).

Baseline data that would provide descriptions of the range and modal approaches to staffing at the preschool and early primary level are needed. This would include ascertaining patterns of authority, decision-making, responsibility for the actual program, and the qualifications and experience of each member of staff. Provisions for staff development, inservice education and career mobility are also needed. Basic information about regulations that govern them should also be surveyed (4, 5,). Staff-child ratios can be included in these survey data.

It is generally agreed that the expertise of the teacher is the principal determinant of the quality of experiences available to the children. Because preschool/child care teachers cannot rely on highly proscribed prespecified instructional or didactic approaches, they actually have greater autonomy than for instance, teachers of upper elementary or secondary grades. It seems reasonable to assume that the greater the autonomy of the teachers and the settings in which they work, the wider will be the range of practices. This means that the quality of some will be excellent and others will be deplorable. Of course, if the distribution of levels of quality of out-of-home settings is skewed it is to hoped that it will be toward the top end. However, general impressions based on years of experience in the field are that the opposite direction is more likely.

The index of quality that is most likely to predict long term impacts of the children's experiences must be taken from 'below'; in other words, we need to make the best inference possible about the quality of life of the children in the setting. There is little or no argument from "above" that the quality of an environment for young children is related to the education, qualifications and/or experience of the adults responsible for them, even though unequivocal data to this effect are not available. But the real determinant of the effects of adults on children must be based on the view from 'below', which may or may not be related to staff qualifications and experience. However, since the background characteristics of the staff are assumed to contribute substantially to their behavior and thus to the quality of the experiences children have, baseline descriptive data of these variables are needed.

In the case of staff in both preschool/child care and early elementary classes, much weight is given to the importance of their knowledge of child development (5, 9, 10, 7). It is difficult to ascertain what is meant by child development knowledge in this context. Nor is it clear how much knowledge of child development is enough, nor how this knowledge is transmuted into principles of practice or actual practices. Perhaps knowledge of child development is related to whether or not the practitioner uses a curriculum model that is more or less prescriptive. However it may be that for adults who teach and care for other people's young children, the intimate knowledge of the child and familiarity with his and her behavior, desires, meanings, etc., that can come only from family intimacy is replaced with a body of knowledge of the norms

and principles of development. Criteria and standards applicable to the acquisition of this body of knowledge should be identified and described. With respect to kindergarten and early primary grade teachers, data describing their qualifications, experience and special preparation for working with young children should be obtained.

In preschool settings, the conditions of work (benefits, etc.) pay scale, turnover rates, incentives for training, etc., can be expected to be related to the quality of the program and the experiences made available to those being served. If these background characteristics and attributes of staff are not related to the experiences they provide for the children, then questions and decisions about the best way to ensure at least minimal standards of acceptable quality of programs can be addressed, perhaps more directly (1, 2, 3). Perhaps the **kind** of training is more important than its **amount.** Or perhaps the amount and kind of **supervision** once on the job, the availability of support services and other resources are more powerful predictors of the quality of life in the setting than just amount of education and training.

Parent-school relations

Most papers address the nature of school-parent relationships not only as an aspect of the quality of a program, but as a link in the chain of causes and effects of the outcomes of children's early experiences. Some authors point out that parents' involvement in their children's schooling is not of equal significance for all families (4, 7).

The relationships between parents and their children's preschool/child care settings and schools may vary on many dimensions of interest, and may also vary within a parent cohort group. Assessment of the extent to which parents are involved in the functioning of the setting requires some level of specification of types of involvement (e.g., hiring/firing staff, in-classroom participation, contributing to materials, special events, field trips, participating in advisory bodies, etc.), and whether parents have and/or exercise high/low power over aspects of the setting's functioning (e.g.,, appointment of staff, curriculum planning, paying fees, representing school on governmental books, etc.). A description of the parents' own perceptions of their relations with the preschool/school setting and its personnel may be a stronger predictor of the impact of the school on the child than the description from 'above' of the structures and mechanisms it provides; of special interest is the extent to which parents experience the staff as accepting/rejecting and supportive/uncaring. The level of parents' confidence in the schools' capacity to strengthen their child's life chances should also be included in the data set.

Another important aspect of school parent relations is the school's role and resources with respect to parent education. However, as suggested in these papers, parental education programs inherently and by definition imply that something is wonting in the parents' behavior. It would be of interest to obtain some explicit formulations of just what it is in the parents' functioning that most needs "fixing.". Parent support groups run by parent peer groups, on the other hand, may be more 'empowering' of parents, and perhaps

more effective as well. More research on these issues, and their long term impacts is needed.

Part III: Summary and Recommendations

What Information do we Need?

Throughout the discussion presented above many variables about which information is needed have been suggested. Overall, it is recommended that both concurrent and longitudinal data are needed with respect to both the qualities of the children's environments (as seen from 'above') and the quality of children's lives (as seen from below). The data gathered under these headings should help us to describe with reasonable reliability where our children between the ages of four to six spend substantial proportions of their time, who is with them in these settings, what quality and qualities these environments have (physically and psychologically) and how they are experienced by the children and their families, and what short and long term effects they produce.

Several hypotheses have been included in the discussion. It is hypothesized that reliable predictors of the effects of an experience on a child's development are more closely related to how the latter is perceived by the child than by the indices of quality as judged from above. It is also hypothesized that under conditions of weak or insecure adult-child attachments, an affective vacuum thereby created is filled by peers that, in turn, leads to premature and strong peer influence; this early peer dependence may have important

long-term consequences for middle childhood and adolescent behavior. It is further hypothesized that there may be an optimum number of relationships such that children subjected to a wide variety of settings during the early years may manifest difficulties in developing the capacity for intimacy (even though are are skilled in sociability) and manifest difficulties in social-psychological adjustment later on. Finally, it is hypothesized that when children are introduced to excessive academic instruction too early, their dispositions to use the skills thus acquired may be jeopardized; this so-called 'damaged disposition' hypothesis is likely to show up toward the end of first grade or during the second grade. To test the damaged disposition hypothesis means that dispositions and motivation should be treated as outcome or dependent measures in studies of early experience.

It is strongly recommended that data pertinent to these hypotheses about the long term consequences of early experiences be gathered.

***Numbered list of Round One Papers**

1. Grubb, N. W. Choosing wisely for children: Policy issues in early childhood Education and the implication for data collection.

2. Kagan, S. L. Entitlement in early care and education: a tale of two rights.

3. Barnett, W. S. Critical data for early childhood education policy.

4. Powell, D. R. Needed directions in policy-oriented research in early childhood education

5. Peters, D. L. Critical policy and research issues for early childhood and elementary education

6. Meisels, S. J.,Steele, D. & Quinn, K. Testing, tracking, and retaining young children: An analysis of research and social policy

7. Bowman, B. Building the foundations for school success:issues in early childhood education

8. Olmstead, P. P. A look at early childhood education in the United States from a global perspective

9. Elkind, D. Early Childhood Education

10. Seefeldt, C. Continuity of curriculum in early childhood education. A position paper.

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